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Basics



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Introduction

The Center for Mental Health Services (CMHS) of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) is pleased to announce that **National Children's Mental Health Awareness Day 2006 will take place on Monday, May 8.**

National Children's Mental Health Awareness Day will be a day on which SAMHSA and the initiatives and programs it supports will promote resilience, recovery, and the transformation of mental health services delivery for children and youth with serious mental health needs and their families.

The goals of National Children's Mental Health Awareness Day 2006 are:

- to raise awareness of effective programs for children's mental health issues;
- to demonstrate how children's mental health initiatives promote recovery and resilience; and
- to show how children with mental health issues thrive in their communities.

The goals of National Children's Mental Health Awareness Day 2006 will be achieved, and the message will be conveyed, through the use of the following communications strategies:

- to hold events on a single day to call attention to our very important work;
- to launch at least one "act of local partnership" to support their sustainability; and
- to feature data that illustrates how children and families in children's mental health initiatives are thriving at home, at school, and in their communities. The data will show that the activities of these initiatives are transforming mental health by fostering resilience, thereby helping to ensure that recovery is possible.

The theme for National Children's Mental Health Awareness Day 2006 is:

"Thriving in the Community."

This planning notebook of technical assistance materials contains tips, resources, and ideas to help you shape your National Children's Mental Health Awareness Day activities. Feel free to customize these materials to meet the needs and goals of your community.

To indicate your intent to participate in National Children's Mental Health Awareness Day, please complete the pledge form on page 1.6 and return it to CMHS.

If you have any comments or questions about this planning notebook, please send an e-mail to notebook@vancomm.com.



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National Children's Mental Health Awareness Day 2006 FAQs

What are the goals of National Children's Mental Health Awareness Day 2006?

The goals of National Children's Mental Health Awareness Day 2006 are:

- to raise awareness of effective programs for children's mental health issues;
- to demonstrate how children's mental health initiatives promote recovery and resilience; and
- to show how children with mental health issues thrive in their communities.

What is the overall message of National Children's Mental Health Awareness Day 2006?

The overall message of National Children's Mental Health Awareness Day is that children and youth with mental health needs and their families are thriving in the community. Children's mental health initiatives promote prevention, recovery, and resilience for children and youth with serious emotional disturbances and their families. It is a goal of children's mental health initiatives to transform the mental health service delivery system for children and youth with mental health needs and their families. You can tailor the national message so that it is relevant to the needs and goals of your program and the community it serves. For tips on how to achieve this, please see section 2.2, "Message Development Tip Sheet."

How will the goals of National Children's Mental Health Awareness Day 2006 be achieved and the message be conveyed?

The goals of National Children's Mental Health Awareness Day 2006 will be achieved, and the message will be conveyed, through the use of the following communications strategies:

- to hold events on a single day to call attention to our very important work;
- to launch at least one "act of local partnership" to support their sustainability; and
- to feature data that illustrates how children and families in children's mental health initiatives are thriving at home, at school, and in their communities. The data will show that the activities of these initiatives are transforming mental health by fostering resilience, thereby helping to ensure that recovery is possible.

By coordinating events and activities from all children's mental health initiatives on a single day, we will gain national impact while keeping activities locally oriented. We will celebrate that we are transforming mental health services for children, youth, and families. National Children's Mental Health Awareness Day 2006 will appeal to a broad range of parties and potential partners, and it will generate positive media attention. By taking part, you will bring attention to the mission and successes of your program and take a hopeful, giant step toward ensuring the sustainability of your program.



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Why was “Thriving in the Community” chosen as the theme for National Children’s Mental Health Awareness Day 2006?

The theme for National Children’s Mental Health Awareness Day, “Thriving in the Community,” serves to support SAMHSA’s vision of “Life in the Community for Everyone.” The artistic, athletic, and academic achievements of children and youth with serious mental health needs will serve as the basis for the events planned at the local level. The child-serving agencies and organizations that partner with children’s mental health initiatives will play a significant role in identifying children and youth whose achievements have enriched schools, neighborhoods, and the greater community in which they live. Showcasing academic achievement will highlight the crucial role education plays in successful children’s mental health initiatives, while celebrations of both artistic and athletic abilities can spark ideas for new partnerships, both within and outside the educational system, that provide additional outlets for children and youth with serious mental health needs to thrive.

Why was May 8 selected as the date for National Children’s Mental Health Awareness Day 2006?

National Children’s Mental Health Awareness Day is scheduled to build on long-standing “May Is Mental Health Month” and “Children’s Mental Health Week” traditions of mental health and family organizations. May Is Mental Health Month was first celebrated by the National Mental Health Association (NMHA) 50 years ago as a way to further elevate awareness of children’s mental health. Children’s Mental Health Week was established by the Federation of Families for Children’s Mental Health. By holding National Children’s Mental Health Awareness Day on May 8, children’s mental health initiatives and programs will have the opportunity to partner with the numerous family and mental health organizations that are holding events during this time. In particular, we see substantial opportunities for children’s mental health initiatives to partner with their local statewide family network organizations. These organizations have been collaborating with the Federation of Families on Children’s Mental Health Week events for the past 10 years, and they will be an invaluable resource for National Children’s Mental Health Awareness Day.

How can we make National Children’s Mental Health Awareness Day 2006 a success?

National Children’s Mental Health Awareness Day’s success depends upon the support and participation of all children’s mental health initiatives, including yours. By planning activities that are creative, meaningful, and appropriate for your program and your community—and by showcasing the achievements of children, youth, families, and your partners—you will do your part to make National Children’s Mental Health Awareness Day successful.



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How can I tailor the activities and events to the needs of my program?

All activities, events, and other materials in this planning notebook are designed to follow the basic values of SAMHSA: They are all designed to be family-driven, youth-guided, and culturally competent.¹ In addition, they have all been designed so that they can easily be localized. There are even templates for press releases, public service announcements (PSAs), and other materials in which you can insert your program's name and contact information before you reproduce and distribute them.

Are materials available in languages other than English or Spanish?

No. If your community has a need for materials in languages other than English or Spanish, we encourage you to work with your local partners to develop materials that are both linguistically and culturally competent.

¹ Family-driven means that families have a primary decisionmaking role in the care of their children and the policies and procedures governing care for children and youth in their community, State, tribe, territory, and Nation. Youth-guided means that youth have the right to be empowered and educated decisionmakers in their own care and the policies and procedures governing care for youth in their community, State, tribe, territory, and Nation. For more information on "family-driven" and "youth-guided," visit www.systemsofcare.samhsa.gov.



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We are asking all participating children's mental health initiatives to fill out the following pledge form so that we can gauge participation, and report on the level of activities to national and local audiences.

National Children's Mental Health Awareness Day 2006 PLEDGE FORM

We, _____ from
(names of signatories)
_____, pledge to hold a
(name of program)

community outreach event on NATIONAL CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS DAY, Monday, May 8, 2006, that upholds the following National Children's Mental Health Awareness Day goals:

- to raise awareness of effective programs for children's mental health issues;
- to demonstrate how children's mental health initiatives promote recovery and resilience; and
- to show how children with mental health issues thrive in their communities.

The goal for our local National Children's Mental Health Awareness Day event will be:

Our partners will include:

Our primary audience(s) will include:

We will undertake the following activities in support of National Children's Mental Health Awareness Day:

We will evaluate our efforts by:

Authorized Signatures

Organization

Date

Please complete and return this form to:

Dario Tirado
Caring for Every Child's Mental Health Campaign Team
2121 K Street, NW, Suite 300
Washington, DC 20037
Phone: (202) 331-4323 • Fax: (202) 331-9420



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National Children's Mental Health Awareness Day Event Ideas

The “Thriving in the Community” theme lends itself well to building partnerships with businesses, media, educators, and others important to your program. Indeed, schools, government agencies and officials, associations, corporations and corporate foundations, and coalitions of community groups are all potential partners to consider in your National Children's Mental Health Awareness Day event-planning. For example, if you are trying to inform local educators about your program, consider partnering with the PTA for a student talent show. If you are trying to educate State policymakers, think about partnering with a local mental health advocacy organization to showcase youth performances at a breakfast or luncheon event.

With the theme “Thriving in the Community,” children's mental health initiatives can be creative and have fun with National Children's Mental Health Awareness Day events. Plan activities and events that demonstrate that children and youth with mental health needs thrive at home, in schools, and in the community. Show how children and youth with mental health needs contribute to the community. From talent contests to poetry slams, your program can take the opportunity to creatively showcase the achievements of children, youth, and families—and partners—to reduce stigma and discrimination. Children's mental health initiatives should create events that highlight their strengths, are appropriate for the target audiences, and have an impact on the larger community they serve. Consider what types of events are taking place in your community in May before choosing an event to ensure that it complements previously scheduled events. And be sure to involve youth and families in the event-planning process, from the early stages of discussing event ideas to the actual planning and implementation of the event itself.

Each event should reflect cultural and linguistic competence. It is important that you stage activities and events that are relevant to people's diverse cultures and languages, and are family-driven and youth-guided from the planning stages through execution. Seek and incorporate input from your program's key audiences. A National Children's Mental Health Awareness Day Planning Committee, comprised of family members, youth, program partners, and others who represent your program, is a good way to make sure that all voices are heard and all interests are served.

Here are some ideas for activities that might be appropriate for your program. We have arranged these activities according to the target audiences for which they are most appropriate.

Educators

- **Academic Events.** Take an opportunity to partner with educators—teachers, school administrators, your local school board—to showcase the achievements of children and youth in the school system. Some activities to consider include:
 - Spelling bees
 - Math-a-lons
 - Chess tournaments
 - Public speaking competitions
 - Science fairs



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These activities take on new significance when held against the backdrop of mental health services. Other activities include:

- Creating a special literary magazine that allows children and youth with mental health needs to tell their stories through prose, poetry, or art.
- Hosting a school-based art contest with a mental health theme and turning the artwork into a student planner for the 2006–2007 school year.

Educators, Policymakers, and General Public

- **Artistic Events.** Art- and arts-themed events often attract policymakers and community leaders, and they are a good low-pressure way to teach the public more about children's mental health and children's mental health initiatives. Here are some activities to consider:
 - Invite the community to take part in an old-fashioned dance marathon, with music that spans the decades, from the 1930s to today. Ask the media to cover the marathon, and provide background stories about how the participants have benefited from your program.
 - Consider working with your children and youth to create a new play or musical about mental health. Ask the local school or community center to provide the stage, and work with partners to promote the event and sell tickets.
 - Work with local youth clubs to coordinate a showcase of child and youth self-expression by encouraging young people to depict their feelings about mental health in words or images. Ask them to incorporate the National Children's Mental Health Awareness Day theme, "Thriving in the Community." Ask a local museum, bank, mall, or other gathering place to display the work, and designate the evening of May 8 as "Opening Night."
 - Promote bonding and networking among partners with a karaoke contest for them, and ask the youth from your program to serve as hosts.

Other events to consider: youth art silent auction, improv contest, ceremonial or traditional dance exhibition, or video game competition.

Educators, Juvenile Justice, Social Workers, and Law Enforcement

- **Athletic Events.** Youth basketball, football, and soccer are universally popular, and you can attract new interest and attention with some offbeat athletic events that showcase the achievements of your program's children, youth, and families.
 - Sponsor family-youth basketball, soccer, or football contests.
 - Consider a jump rope or hopscotch competition run by youth with adults as the competitors.
 - Sponsor the world's largest game of Twister® or a human chess tournament.
 - Showcase youth and family relationships with a family-focused fishing tournament or outdoor scavenger hunt.

General Public

- **News Conference.** This is the perfect event if your program has something newsworthy to announce. Newsworthy announcements could include the introduction of a new partner, such as a governmental, corporate, or foundation partnership. A news conference might also highlight a new partnership with a local school or school system to launch a major anti-stigma program for teachers and students.



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- **Mayoral Proclamation.** This is a relatively low-cost, low-effort activity with newsmaking potential. Encourage your community's mayor or another high-ranking official to issue a proclamation declaring Monday, May 8, as National Children's Mental Health Awareness Day. Depending upon the size of your city, you can contact the mayor directly or work with a staff member or aide within the mayor's office. A sample proclamation is included in this notebook. Ask the mayor or city official to invite a local family to participate in the proclamation announcement.

Local Businesses and Policymakers

- **Vocational Events.** Vocational events not only highlight the achievements of children and youth, they demonstrate that your program is an important resource for the greater community. The following activities can demonstrate your community-minded spirit:
 - Work with your partners to highlight child and youth achievements and generosity by sponsoring a community service project, such as building a house for a needy family or cleaning up a neglected park or playground.
 - Host a bake-off with the proceeds benefiting your program.
 - Make quilts, blankets, or scarves for a local children's charity.
 - Highlight the importance of mental and physical health by organizing youth from your program to spend a day reading to children in a local hospital.

Policymakers

- **Legislative Briefing.** In order to ensure the sustainability of your program, you might need to enlist the support of your State government. Because so many entities compete for legislative attention, you will need to state your case effectively and passionately. State budgets are extremely tight, so it is essential that you demonstrate that your program has measurable outcomes. A legislative briefing that includes your State legislators, as well as key members of committees or subcommittees that address children's and/or mental health issues, is the ideal way for you to both communicate your successes and demonstrate your need for funding. A breakfast or luncheon briefing featuring spokespeople from your program, a data-intensive PowerPoint presentation demonstrating your program's successes, and testimonies from children and families who have benefited from your program's activities will help put your program's needs on the legislative agenda.
- **Hands Around the Capitol/Hands Around City Hall.** Depending upon your program's location, you can generate substantial media coverage with a quiet, yet highly visible demonstration of solidarity in support of children's and youths' mental health issues by joining hands and surrounding your State capitol building or city hall. Obviously, such an event will require high participation in order to be successful, so you will likely need to include youth and families within your program, as well as members of partner organizations. If your program is located in a State that has more than one children's mental health initiative (California, Colorado, Florida, New York, etc.), you might want to join forces in order to achieve maximum participation. In addition, you will want to consider having a speaker or speakers, including public officials such as the mayor or governor, to ensure media coverage. This type of activity will involve a high level of advance planning and preparation: You will need to secure permits, have volunteers on hand to coordinate the effort and provide refreshments, and work with law enforcement officials.



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All Audiences

- **Recognition Program.** The reward strategy—acknowledging people, organizations, or other entities that have made positive contributions to children’s mental health—has been shown to be an effective means to counter stigma and further the issue of children’s mental health. Using the “Thriving in the Community” theme, consider presenting an award to several different groups who have supported your program and children’s mental health. Consider presenting an award to:
 - Media that have run positive stories about your program or children’s mental health.
 - A local theater group that has staged a play that portrays children’s mental health in a positive light.
 - A public official who has championed a children’s mental health issue as a result of firsthand experiences with serious mental health needs.

All of these examples are worthy of public acknowledgment through a recognition program. You can stage as simple or as elaborate a program as your time and budget allow—from an afternoon media event geared toward landing the program on the evening news, to a formal dinner program that could also serve as a fundraiser. In addition, depending upon whom you recognize—for example, a legislator, local celebrity, media figure, or hometown hero—the individual might actually help generate attention.

- **Highlight Heroes.** Show your community how partners, children, youth, and families have contributed to the success of your program. Host a local heroes’ day and partner with a local media organization to allow children from your program to interview the local heroes of mental health. Ask a media partner to highlight one hero a day on the morning or evening news.
- **Promotional Item.** Collaborate with your partners or other children’s mental health initiatives to create a promotional item, such as a pen, magnet, lapel pin, or button that bears a “May Is Mental Health Month,” “Children’s Mental Health Week,” or “Thriving in the Community” message. Make sure the promotional item you choose suits your target audience. Mental health wristbands might be popular with the general public, for example, yet they might not be suitable for juvenile justice or law enforcement. You might even want to test various items with your target audiences to see which ones they like the best. Once you choose the right promotional item, distribute it to your target audience. Not only will you gain attention on National Children’s Mental Health Awareness Day, you will keep your message in front of your target audience for weeks or even months. To find suppliers of promotional items, look in the Yellow Pages for “Promotional Items” or search for “Promotional Items” on the Internet.



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Identifying and Involving Local Program Partners

Finding and Involving Local Partners to Boost Success

Forming and cultivating partnerships among a variety of local and State audiences increases the sustainability of each children's mental health initiative. In fact, one of the strategies of National Children's Mental Health Awareness Day is to involve potential partners in the work and successes of your program.

Remember that the name of the game is "partnership." Look for partners that have something to gain from an alliance with your program, as well as the ability to enhance your message. While the goal of partnership formation is the sustainability of your program, not every partnership will or should generate direct financial support. Nor should you approach only those partners who can provide financial support. Community recognition, public image, the opportunity to work with you and your other partners, and the idea of contributing to the issue of children's mental health can all be powerful incentives for a like-minded partner.

This simple, systematic approach to partnership-building should yield results:

1. **Determine Your Needs.** Identify what you want from a partnership. It can be as simple as access to a new mailing list for potential invitees. In a broader sense, National Children's Mental Health Awareness Day partnerships can add credibility to your message and attract previously hard-to-reach audiences. Do not be afraid to think big, yet start small.
2. **Make a List of Possible Partners.** Brainstorm potential partners that can help you reach your goals. Likely prospects include schools, governmental organizations, community and neighborhood associations, corporations and corporate foundations, community centers, and churches, synagogues, and other faith-based organizations.
3. **Choose Likely Candidates.** Concentrate your efforts on potential partners who are most likely to say "yes." Consider:
 - **Connections.** If you have a board member or other strong contact at a company or organization, see if that person would be willing to introduce your program to the group's decisionmakers.
 - **History.** Has the group been involved with children's or mental health issues or given resources in the past?
 - **Ownership.** Your best corporate prospects are companies with local ownership, local franchises, or national organizations where charitable and/or media decisions are made at local branches or outlets.
 - **Reciprocity.** Determine how the organization can benefit from working with your program. What can you offer the partner in return for its support?



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4. **Identify Contacts.** Every organization, whether a school, a business, or a city, county, or State government, has its own hierarchy of decisionmakers. Take the time to locate someone who can provide an introduction to the most appropriate contact within the organization. If that is not possible, these tips will help you prepare a more compelling presentation:
 - **Find Out Who Calls the Shots.** If you are looking for a governmental partnership, find out which entities, such as legislative committees or subcommittees, focus on children's or mental health issues; then find out who sits on those committees or subcommittees. If you are approaching a specific school, you can approach the school's principal; if you are approaching an entire district, contact members of the board of education. If you are hoping to form a corporate partnership, contact the company's corporate contributions, community relations, or community investment departments. You can usually find this information on corporate Web sites or by calling the company and asking for the name, title, and address of the person or group in charge of community relations.
 - **Learn as Much as You Can About the Organization.** Find out what other partnerships or contributions the organization has, whether it has experience with children's or mental health issues, and what it might hope to gain from an alliance with you.
 - **Choose Organizations With Similar Missions To Reach Specific Audiences.** If your program serves a sizable African American, Tribal, Hmong, or any other ethnic minority, develop partnerships with organizations in those communities. If your program serves a sizable Hispanic constituency, you might want to reach out to organizations dedicated to the needs of that community, such as an affiliate of the National Council of La Raza.
5. **Make Your Pitch.** Nothing beats a personal relationship. If you already have an "in" with your target partners, use it. Ask your contact to introduce you to the decisionmakers you need to reach. Your goal is to arrange a face-to-face meeting, where you can state your case and get their support. On the other hand, if you do not have a connection, you should make your first contact in writing—not by telephone or e-mail. Include the following:
 - A brief statement on the status of children's mental health in your community, the goals of your National Children's Mental Health Awareness Day event, and what it can mean to that organization;
 - How the partner will benefit—specifically, what you will provide in terms of recognition, linkages, or other items of value to the potential partner;
 - Specific information about your local program;
 - Options for how the partner can help. For example, it could give you a grant to sustain your program's annual operating expenses, feature your program's success stories in a newsletter, or contact media on your behalf to request public service announcements;
 - General information about your program, including your nonprofit status;
 - Contact information for you and your program; and
 - When you will call to follow up.



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6. **Follow Up.** Give your pitch a week to arrive, and then make the follow-up phone call. Be prepared to send your pitch again, possibly to a different person. Ask for a meeting where you can make your pitch face-to-face. When you meet with the prospective partner:
 - Be clear about what you want the partner to do for you;
 - Come prepared with good information on costs and other things the prospective partner might want to know, including facts about National Children's Mental Health Awareness Day itself;
 - Be flexible: Have alternative ideas available for the prospective partner to consider; and
 - Listen to what the prospective partner wants in return. Decide how your program can create a win-win situation for all.
7. **Come to an Agreement, and Put It in Writing.** Work with the partner to specify exactly what you can expect from each other and when.
8. **Maintain the Relationship.** Like any relationship, the partnership needs attention in order to grow. Maintain two-way communications with your partners and keep them posted on news from your program and your National Children's Mental Health Awareness Day plans—even if it is a controversial issue or unflattering portrayal of your program (it is better for them to hear it from you than from the media). In addition, be sure to send thank-you notes to program partners, and make sure they receive evaluation data. Working together will likely increase the partner's interest in your program and increase its commitment to it.

